T. Kaczynski
HCR 30 Box 27
Lincoln MT 59639

LINCOLN, MT
JAN 15
PM
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Hemingway
USA 25

Wanda Kaczynski
463 N Ridge Ave.
Lombard IL 60148

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Jan [illegible]

Dear Mom:

Your friend [illegible] Schoer wrote to me saying th instead of giving the photo to you to send me he is going to send it to me directly in the Spring. This would oblige me to make a special trip to the post office to pick it up.

Well, I'm not going to do it, so the post office will just have to send their silly photo back to them. I didn't ask for this and I don't want it. They're your friends, not mine, and I don't want to have anything to do with them or their photo. I would have just ignored their offer except that you felt that that would embarrass you. When I make a trip to town i pretty well shoots half the day: I have to fetch water, wash up, change clothes, bike to town, etc., chan back out of my going-to-town clothes when I get home.. So I'm not going to make a trip to the post-office every time some twerp decides to send me some tra that I don't want.

If you like, you can make this excuse: Tell th you are going to send me a package, and tell them I prefer to have everything sent together in one packag because with only one package I only have to make a trip to the Post Office, whereas with 2 packages I ha to make 2 separate trips — so would they please give you the photo so you can send it in your package.

If you don't like that excuse, then its your problem and you can worry about it. I am not going to worry about the Schoers or their photo, nor am I going to make a special trip to town to pick it up. I just want to be that [illegible] not going [illegible] with the obligation of answering any letters from your friends.

N. Schoen's letter, by the way, was a longish and it fully confirmed my impression that he is a silly nitwit. He also sent me a magazine with it and I do not like to receive unsolicited magazines. So certainly not going to encourage him by answering letter.

Well, that takes care of the unpleasant part of this letter.

In a more agreeable vein, a little while ago I wr to the Skeptical Inquirer* for a list of back issues, because thought I might want to order one with an article on "near death experiences." I now have the list, and it appears that back issues that I have are still available, so they could be replaced if lost in the mail. If this changes your mind about wanting me to send them to you, I am still willing to send them, if you like. As an alternative, however, you might want order for yourself some back issues that have articles on the subjects you asked me about. As I recall, the subjects y asked about were suspended animation, fire-walking, and levitation. I didn't see on the list any articles about suspe animation, but there is one issue that has two articles on fire-walking, and another issue that has two articles on levitation.

The Spring, 1989 issue of the Skeptical Inquirer (Vol. 13, includes "The Lore of Levitation" by Gordon Stein, and "Levitation 'Miracles' in India" by B. Premanand.

The Fall, 1985 issue (Vol. 10, No. 1) includes "Investigations of Firewalking" by Bernard Leikind and

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* They spell "Inquirer" with an "I"; I had spelled it with an "E".

William [illegible];
by Michael Dennett.

If you are sufficiently interested to want to order these issues, the address to write to is

Skeptical Inquirer
Box 229
Buffalo, NY 14215

60324031 DUI
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(They also give a toll-free number, 800-634-161
The price is $6.25 for each back issue, and, for postage and handling, $1.25 for first back issue and 50¢ for each additional back issue.

Yes, it was very cold here for awhile. One morning my thermometer made it 33° below zero, which is equal to the coldest temperature I've known here. But that's no problem if yo know how to dress and take care of yourself in the cold. It was up to 31° below zero by the time I got dressed and went out. I was outdoors cutting firewood in the cold fo several hours, but by mid-afternoon the temperature had zoomed up to a sweltering 18° below zero, and I started to think about putting in bananas next year. In that kind of weather I wear my old coat that I made about 13 years ago by quilting snowshoe-hare skins between pieces cloth taken from a worn-out sleeping-bag. That coat is getti kind of tattered by now, but it's still the warmest coat I've ev had.

It gets a lot colder in Lincoln than it does here. I'm told it was down to 54° below zero in Lincoln. I think th in severe cold the coldest air tends to settle in the valley-botto as at Lincoln and even along Poorman Creek. Since I'm a little higher here, the temperatures are more moderate.

I read your family history with great interest.
Very likely I'll make some further comments on it at later time, after I've had a chance to think it over, but for the present I'll only mention the following point

You know, on a number of occasions in the past when I've heard you recount incidents that I myself had witnessed, your stories were very inaccurate through being overdramatized. Consequently I have no rational choice but to be skeptical about the accuracy of your history. I hasten to add that I don't doubt for a moment that your mother abused you very badly, and I'm even prepared to assume that the abuse was, in a general way as bad as you depicted it, since that seems to be confirmed by Freda's letter. But for me it necessarily remains an open question to what extent your account is accurate in detail. Of course, quite apart from your penchant for dramatization, anyone's long-term memories may contain inaccuracies

One might possibly see a connection between the physical abuse you suffered as a kid and the psychologica abuse you inflicted on me during my teens. The psychologi claim that people who abuse their kids are usually people who were abused themselves as kids. I don't know to what extent this is actually true — there is a lot of B. that gets peddled in the name of psychology. And Dad didn't fit that pattern — he inflicted as much verbal abuse on me as you did, yet I never heard anythin that would indicate he ever suffered any abuse himself. In fairness to you I should add that I always felt you were a good mother to me duri my early years. It was when I was around 8 years old that your behavior and the family atmosphere began to deteriorate, and it was during my teens that I was subjec to constant, cutting insults such as imputations of immaturity or mental illness. But enough on that subjec for the moment — I'll take it up again at a later date.

If you haven't read Joseph Conrad's novel The Secret Agent, I can recommend it to you very strongly. The central character of this novel is a wom who in childhood suffered abuse from a drunken father that is very reminiscent of the kind of thing th you depict in your history. I think you would strongly identify with this woman and greatly appreci the novel. The critics consider The Secret Agent to be of Conrad's greatest works, and I agree with them. The revolutionaries depicted in the novel are mere caricatur but the central figures — Mr. Verloc and his 3 dependents — are a brilliant triumph of the novelist's a

In her letter, Freda refers to "histories", plural. If t are any other family histories that I haven't seen, I'd be interested to read them, and if you ever decide to expand your family history to include your years after age 10, I'd interested to read that part too, and also any independ accounts or comments by Benny or Freda that may be obtainable.

So — thank you very much for sending me your interesting history.

Actually, though, you judge your mother

harshly. Bear in mind that there are no perfect parents ... or perfect children, either. As you have reminded me several times.

It seems a pity that you've thrown out, given away, or sold so much of your old stuff. Did you ever get Dad's old .22 rifle back, or was it confiscated as being used in the "crime" of suicide. If you got it back, you might want to save it for me, since I'd like to have it if Dave doesn't want it. It is a good old gun. You couldn't send it through the mail, but perhaps you would save it for me. But maybe you'd rather get rid of it as being associated with bad memories — which of course is OK.

Got any magnifying glasses you don't want?

How about that box of old music books that used to be under your bed? Have you gotten rid of all that? There was some wonderful old music in some of those books — stuff that would be hard to replace. Especially I would like to have an old "Method for Trombone or Baritone," by a certain Voxman, if you still have that. Also a trumpet book by the same Voxman, if Dave doesn't want it.

What I especially hope you haven't thrown out is some old letters of mine. When I was in Lombard some 11 or 12 years ago I went up in the attic to look for something, and, rummaging around amongst the boxes and so forth, I came on some old letters of mine that you had apparently

[illegible]
first few lines to see what they were. I hope you haven't thrown these out, because I'd like to have them. This is not so much for sentimental reasons as because (as I've said before) I'm interested in the accuracy of long-term memory. I'd like to take each letter, read just the first few lines to see what it is about, then write whatever I can remember about that subject, and finally read the letter to compare my memories with the content of the letter.

So I'd appreciate it if you could send me either the letters, or photocopies of them if you prefer to keep the originals yourself.

If it is not convenient for you to crawl up in the attic to rummage around for the letters, then of course you need not do so. But please remembe that if at any future time you come upon those letters amongst your effects, I'd like to have them, so don't throw them out.

When you expressed anxiety in your last letter about pipes freezing, furnace problems, and other thing that Dad used to take care of, I wished I could be there to help you out. Since I can't, however, I'll make th following suggestion, for whatever it may be worth to you. When something breaks or goes wrong, try to fix it yoursel instead of immediately calling a repairman. If you fail to fix it, you can always call a repairman afterward. If you succeed in fixing it, you will have learned somethin and will know how to deal with similar problems in the future. Anyhow, I think you're basically pretty self-reliant and will soon get over worrying about [illegible] things.

I [illegible] told [illegible] that you and Dad had planned to leave the house and move to an apartment. Are you still planning to move to an apartment? I can't help thinking that you'd be less happy there than in your own home. In your own house you have more privacy, more autonomy, more control over your own living conditions. You can always hire a lawn service or a neighborhood kid to cut the grass and a painter to repaint the house when necessary. You can seal off the extra bedrooms if you don't want to clean them. However, the decision [illegible] yours to make, so I say no more about it.

— Ted